

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 12-22 are pending in this application. Claims 15-22 are withdrawn from consideration. By this amendment, Claim 13 is amended; and no claims are canceled or added herewith. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the Outstanding Office Action, Claims 13-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Seko in view of JP 49024286 to Babel; and Claim 12 was allowed.

With respect to the rejection of independent Claim 13 based on Seko and Babel, that rejection is respectfully traversed. In particular, it is respectfully asserted that the applied art does not teach or suggest providing a single centering shaft independently of the pair of bladder operating sleeves to displace the pair of bladder operating sleeves minutely within a horizontal plane when inserted into the pair of bladder operating sleeves; making the single centering shaft pass through centers of the lower mold, the upper mold, the green tire, the bladder and the pair of bladder operating sleeves during a vulcanization by extending the single centering shaft from the upper mold into the pair of bladder operating sleeves; and performing the vulcanization processing with the single centering shaft centering the pair of bladder operating sleeves relative to the lower mold and the upper mold through a minute displacement of the pair of bladder operating sleeves within the horizontal plane, as recited in Claim 13.

In response to Applicants' argument that piston rod 33 in Babel corresponds to one of a pair of bladder operating sleeves and that piston rod 33 along with sleeve 22 correspond to function as a pair of bladder operating sleeves, the Office Action asserts on page 3, second paragraph, that piston rod 33 is not a bladder operating sleeve as it runs down the center of

the apparatus. Further, the Office Action asserts on the last paragraph of page 4 that Babel teaches the use of a single centering shaft 29R that passes through the center of the lower mold, the upper mold, the green tire, the bladder and the pair of bladder operating sleeves where the centering shaft extends from the upper mold 7 into the pair of bladder operating sleeve 22.

Applicants submit that the assertions of the Office Action discussed above are incorrect and inconsistent. For example, the Office Action defines the piston rod 33 in the applied art as centering shaft on one hand, but defines the member 29R as centering shaft on the other hand. These definitions are clearly inconsistent with each other. It is to be noted that in Babel, reference numeral 29R is not used and that reference numeral 29A used therein to be similar to “29R” denotes center hole 29A in the passage “Cover 29 of cylinder 34 encompasses center hole 29A and” Please see the USPTO’s translation of Babel, page 13, fourth paragraph, line 1. In fact, the USPTO’s translation of Babel describes that “Piston 38, which is supported by rod 33,” (page 9, fourth paragraph, line 1); “The upper end of the piston supports contact member 31 and the position of said member on rod 33 may be adjustable.....” (page 9, fourth paragraph, lines 3-4); “Member 31 covers a surface of vulcanizing inner tube 25, which can be expanded,” (page 9, last paragraph, lines 1-2); “cylindrical sleeve 22 is installed so that it can slide and reciprocally move in the axial direction....” (page 10, first paragraph, lines 2-3); and “Upper rim 24 of sleeve 22, which is extended, holds the opposite surface of inner tube 25.” (page 10, first paragraph, lines 6-7)

Applicants submit that it is apparent that the piston 38 and the piston rod 33 hold and move a surface of vulcanizing inner tube 25 (corresponding to the bladder in the claimed invention) while the cylindrical sleeve 22 holds and moves the opposite surface of the inner tube 25, and therefore, that the piston 38 and the piston rod 33 in Babel correspond in function to one of the bladder operating sleeves in Applicants’ claimed invention while the

cylindrical sleeve 22 in Babel corresponds in function to the other of the bladder operating sleeves in Applicants' claimed invention.

Additionally, in looking at Claims (1) and (2) defined on pages 2-4 in the USPTO's translation of Babel, wherein "a long operational element" and "a ring-like sleeve" recited in Claim (1) which are respectively fixed to the upper and lower surfaces of the inner tube are readable respectively on the piston rod 33/the piston 38 and the cylindrical sleeve 22 described in the specification. Further, "a piston" and "a ring-like sleeve" recited in Claim (2) which are respectively fixed to the upper and lower surfaces of the inner tube are readable respectively on the piston 38 and the cylindrical sleeve 22 described in the specification.

It is further to be noted that Babel does teach a cylindrical sleeve 22 as noted above, but does not teach "the pair of bladder operating sleeve 22" quoted in the Office Action. It is also to be noted that the single centering shaft or the equivalent thereof which is independent of the piston rod/the piston and the ring-like sleeve is nowhere to be found in the specification of Babel. In light of the foregoing discussions, it is respectfully stated that Babel does not teach a single centering shaft which, as recited in Claim 13 now amended, is provided independently of the pair of bladder operating sleeves for displacing the pair of bladder operating sleeves minutely within a horizontal plane when inserted into the pair of bladder operating sleeves.

Moreover, Applicants' claimed invention at issue recites that during the vulcanization processing, the single centering shaft centers the pair of bladder operating sleeves relative to the lower mold and the upper mold through a minute displacement of the pair of bladder operating sleeves within the horizontal plane. The "minute displacement" is supported at least in the paragraph bridging page 17-18 and the paragraph bridging pages 22-23 in the present application (i.e., the translation of the international application).

In contrast, Babel states that “since piston 38 and sleeve 22 are concentric with each other, the tube is held in the center position of the tire material” (the USPTO’s translation of Babel page 10, last paragraph). This statement suggests that because the piston 38 and the sleeve 22 are in axial alignment, the tube (i.e., the bladder in Applicants’ claimed invention at issue) can automatically be centered with respect to the tire material and hence, that it is no longer necessary in Babel to center the piston 38 and the sleeve 22 through a minute displacement thereof. Therefore, Babel neither teaches nor suggests, nor would one of skill in the art be motivated to modify Babel to enable the piston 38 and the sleeve 22 (corresponding to the pair of bladder operating sleeves in Applicants’ claimed invention at issue) to be displaceable minutely within the horizontal plane and to center the piston 38 and the sleeve 22 through a minute displacement within the horizontal plane.

Accordingly, it is respectfully stated that Babel not only fails to teach providing the single centering shaft independently of the pair of bladder operating sleeves, but also fails to teach or suggest centering the pair of bladder operating sleeves relative to the lower mold and the upper mold through a minute displacement of the pair of bladder operating sleeves within the horizontal plane. Seko does not make up for the deficiencies of Babel discussed above nor does the Office Action assert as such. Reconsideration for allowance of Claim 13 and Claim 14 depending therefrom, together with allowance of Claim 12 indicated in the Office Action, is respectfully requested.

Consequently, for the reasons discussed in detail above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.


Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, L.L.P.

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/07)

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Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Kevin M. McKinley
Registration No. 43,794